Revamped Public Distribution System in Gujarat

2233. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that large scale diversion of PDS commodities takes place in the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) in the State of Gujarat with the connivance of Fair Price shopkeepers and officials of Supplies Department of the State;

(b) if so, whether Government have detected such diversion in the State during the last three years and details thereof, district and year-wise; and

(c) the action taken by Government in such cases and also to prevent diversion of PDS items by FP shopkeepers with active connivance of officials in RPDS in Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Under the joint responsibility, the operational responsibility of Public Distribution System (PDS) at FPS level vests entirely with the State Government. The Central Government has not recieved any specific complaints of diversion of PDS commodities under Revamped PDS in the State of Gujarat.

Rise in Non-Tariff Barriers

2234. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government have been drawn to the news-item captioned "Non-tariff barriers on the rise" as reported in Pioneer dated 16th July, 1996;

(b) if so, whether according to the study conducted by FIOCI, it has been revealed that the use of non-tariff barriers have increased since the past few years; and

(c) if so, further reaction Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government has identified Non-Tariff Barriers imposed by India's Major Trading Partners. Such barriers include textiles quotas, anti-dumping and counter-vailing duties, strict standards relating to health and environment etc. Most of such protectionist measures are consistant with the relevant GATT/WTO Agreements. Never theless, the non-tariff barriers identified by us are taken up bilaterally with our trading partners to ensure that market access of Indian exporters is not unreasonably hindered by these trading partners. In case of any inconsistency or discrimination, India has a right to approach the WTO dispute settlement mechanism for redressal.

Health hazards due to asbestos

2235. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that asbestos is very injurious to health as reported in the International Herald Tribune dated 4th July, 1996;

(b) whether for that reasons U.S.A. banned it twenty years ago;

(c) whether France has also banned it after it saw that 2,000 persons a year were losing their life as a result of cancer caused by asbestos;

(d) whether Government would consider banning asbestos if so, by when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Asbestos Fibre is one of the several